

**Vermilion County Conservation District
Headquarters: Kennekuk County Park
Danville, IL**

**RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Wednesday, November 17, 2021
4:30 p.m.
Cellular One Classroom
Environmental Education Center
Kennekuk County Park, Danville, Illinois**

President Staske called the November Regular Meeting of the Vermilion County Conservation District Board of Trustees to order and opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

Agenda item number three, Roll Call showed the following to be present.

Trustees Present: Michael P. Arbuckle
Jessica Augustson
Michael H. Gast
Randy A. Johnson
Doug R. Staske

Trustee(s) Absent: none

In attendance were Executive Director Jamie Pasquale, Associate Director of Administration and Personnel Kim Fox, and Recording Secretary Amy Steeples.

Staff members present: Lara Danzl and Gary Tyrl.

President Staske welcomed newly appointed VCCD Trustee, Jessica Augustson, to the Board.

Trustee Augustson stated that she serves as the Assistant Director of the Danville Library. She learned of the VCCD Board opening when she attended the last Leadership Tomorrow Class held at Kennekuk, and is a VCCD Volunteer.

First order of business, agenda item number four, was the Adoption of, or Amendments to the Agenda.

President Staske asked for amendments to the agenda. There were none, however Executive Director Pasquale noted that there were no renewal rates or policies for employee medical insurance to approve [Item eight f.] and no amendments to approve for the VCCD Personnel Policy [item eight d.].

Trustee Johnson moved to approve the November agenda as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Arbuckle. All in favor by acclamation, motion to approve the agenda carried.

Agenda item number five. Approval of the Minutes from the September 15, 2021, Regular Meeting. The October regular meeting was canceled.

With no comments or corrections, *Trustee Arbuckle moved to approve the September 15, 2021, Regular Meeting Minutes. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast. All in favor by acclamation, motion carried.*

Item number six. Audience Comments. President Staske stated each person has a maximum of three minutes, total maximum of 30 minutes for all audience comments. There were none. Executive Director Pasquale introduced Lara Danzl, Education Supervisor and Gary Tyrl, Kennekuk Park Superintendent in the audience.

Agenda item number seven, the Treasurer’s Report. President Staske asked if there were any questions on items seven a through f. This included the bills, checks and journal entries for September 2021 and November 2021.

Trustee Gast moved to approve the Manual Checks dated September 2021 in the amount of \$361,246.63, which included check #'s 41709 – 41722, 41735 – 41740, and 41742 - 14762; the current list of voucher checks dated October 21, 2021 in the amount of \$20,316.06, which included check #'s 41782 – 41798; the Manual Checks dated October 2021 in the amount of \$59,052.93, which included check #'s 41763 – 41781 and 41799 – 41815; current list of voucher checks dated November 18, 2021 in the amount of \$2,477.84, which included check #'s 41831 – 41839; and the General Journal Entries through October 31, 2021. This was followed by a second from Trustee Johnson.

With no other questions or comments, President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Johnson	-	yes
Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Augustson	-	yes
Trustee Staske	-	yes

The vote was 5 – 0 in favor, motion to approve the bills, checks and journal entries carried.

Agenda item number seven g. and h. Budget Reports. President Staske asked for any questions regarding the budget reports. There were none.

President Staske moved to approve the Budget Reports from September and October as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Johnson.

With no other questions or comments, President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Staske	-	yes
Trustee Johnson	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Augustson	-	yes

The vote was 5 – 0 in favor, motion to approve the September and October Budget Reports carried.

Agenda item number seven i. Report on Cash and Investments. President Staske thanked Associate Director of Administration and Personnel Fox for the additional cash and investment bank account descriptions. Included were both reports dated October 20, 2021 and she reported that as of November 17, 2021, the NOW checking account balance is \$211,311; Illinois Funds Investment Pool balance is \$240,107, the Illinois Funds Money Market Fund balance remains at \$5,401. First Farmers Bank Money Market Passbook account balance is \$249,101; Central Illinois

Bank Money Market passbook account balance is \$245,684. The Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) balance is \$4,843. First Saving Bank NOW account balance is at \$248,745; the NOW account at Catlin Bank balance is \$249,388. The 3 mo. CD [Whittaker Funds] at Iroquois Federal at .05% interest balance is now \$57,456; the 3 mo. CD [Wagner Funds] at Iroquois Federal invested at .05% interest balance is \$50,760. A 3-month certificate of deposit that was acquired in September for \$250,000 at Longview Bank at .20% interest now has a balance of \$250,126. The 2-year, with 6-month option acquired at Illinois National Bank has a balance of \$250,000.

The grand total of cash and investments for November 2021: \$2,062,957. This compares to \$1,707,774. in November of 2020.

Associate Director of Administration and Personnel Fox commented that she was monitoring the account balances due to FDIC maximum insurance balance limit of \$250,000.

Executive Director Pasquale stated that the District is trending high mainly due to 1) unexpected increase in CPPRT tax revenues, 2) increased district revenue, and 3) decreased payroll expenses [cut in seasonal employees and loss of one full time employee].

Trustee Johnson inquired, with the District Budget of a little over \$1M, how long could the District continue to operate using district reserves; 18 – 24 months? What does it cost to run the parks per month?

Executive Director Pasquale responded that the District could run for at least 18-24 months. Any longer than that time period, some changes should be considered.

Agenda item eight. Specific Items of Business to be Transacted. Item eight a. Discuss/approve Ordinance No. 189, annual levy for 2021 real estate taxes payable in 2022. Executive Director Pasquale explained that in 2020, the levy was 3.4% or approximately \$30,000. This year, 2021, he proposes a 2.5% increase or approximately \$33,700.

President Staske noted that the proposed tax levy rate increase puts the District at 97% of the allowable increase.

Trustee Arbuckle questioned how much more would that mean for a Vermilion County individual?

Executive Director Pasquale replied that it would be approximately \$3 - \$5 increase for the VCCD portion.

Trustee Gast asked if he could foresee any major expenses in capital or maintenance.

Executive Director Pasquale stated that the District could handle everything in the budget that was projected. There will be things that aren't anticipated, but he doesn't foresee any large expenses coming up.

With no other questions or comments, *Trustee Johnson moved to approve Ordinance No. 159, Annual Tax Levy Ordinance for the 2021 taxes due in 2022. This was followed by a second from Trustee Arbuckle.*

With no other questions or comments, President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Johnson	-	yes
Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Augustson	-	yes

Trustee Staske - yes

The vote was 5 – 0 in favor, motion to approve Ordinance No. 159 carried.

Agenda item eight b. Approve Ordinance No. 160, abating taxes levied for 2017 Alternative Revenue Source Bonds for 2021. President Staske explained the purpose for this ordinance is a “safety net” document stating that the VCCD has the funds and will pay the bond payment on time. This is necessary each year.

Executive Director Pasquale gave a brief background of the bond.

With no other comments or questions, *Trustee Arbuckle moved to approve Ordinance No. 160, abating the tax hereto levied for 2021 to pay the principal of and interest on the General Obligation Bonds, 2017. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast.*

With no other questions or comments, President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Johnson	-	yes
Trustee Augustson	-	yes
Trustee Staske	-	yes

The vote was 5 – 0 in favor, motion to approve Ordinance No. 160 carried.

Agenda item eight c. Approve general liability insurance. A cover sheet and schedule of IPARKS benefits package was sent to all trustees with their packet to preview. Executive Director Pasquale highlighted details on the coverage. The general liability insurance is rarely put out for bid due to the coverage needed regarding the specific needs of the VCCD. IPARKS specializes in coverage for park and conservation districts; i.e., coverage for the different services the VCCD offers as well as Lake Mingo Dam and the two observation towers at Forest Glen Preserve. The policy increased \$4,000 from last year; previous premium was locked in for a three-year period. Current coverage quote from IPARKS is \$31,066 for December 1, 2021 through November 31, 2022. IPARKS also offers health and safety grants (rebates), which the district has applied for, that can be used for many safety upgrades.

With no further questions or comments, *Trustee Johnson moved to approve the IPARKS General Liability Insurance premium for 2021-2022 in the amount of \$31,066. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast.*

With no other questions or comments, President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Johnson	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Augustson	-	yes
Trustee Staske	-	yes

The vote was 5 – 0 in favor, motion to approve the general liability insurance from IPARKS carried.

Agenda item eight d. Discuss/approve amendments to the VCCD Employee Personnel Policy. The lawyer has not finished with the amendments to the policy regarding banked sick time and cleaning up some verbiage.

Trustee Johnson moved to table the amendments to the VCCD Personnel policy until the next meeting. This was followed by a second from Trustee Arbuckle. All in favor by acclamation, motion carried.

Agenda item eight e. Discuss/approve 2022 VCCD User Fee Schedule. This includes the building and shelter rental fees, and the VCCD boat decals, hunting permits, group camp fees, speaker fees, etc. Copies of the proposed 2022 schedules were given to the trustees in their packets for review.

Executive Director Pasquale stated that along with some fee increases, the rental fee levels according to number of people in a group were increased from 0 – 74 to 0 – 100; 75 – 149 to 101 – 200; and 150 – 300 to 201+. The last time any rental fees were increased was 2018. He noted that the open-air shelter fees were not increased at this time. *See attached building and shelter rate document.*

The price to buy materials and build a picnic table is approximately \$500 - \$600. In Kennekuk alone the picnic table value totals \$125,000.

Trustee Gast inquired about the increase in 2021 rental fee revenues. Was that due to the COVID pandemic in 2020?

Associate Director of Administration and Personnel Fox responded that they may have backed off when preparing the budget for 2021 rentals. This year's rental fee revenue is \$41,220; budget at this point is \$35,000. Typically, there is approximately \$45,000 in rental fee income.

Executive Director Pasquale next highlighted the increases and revisions for the VCCD 2022 User Fee Schedule. Boat decals, hunt permits, public campsites and specialty hunts are not increased. There is no longer a specialty hunt –Forest Glen -youth fee for \$6. There was a significant increase in Forest Glen Group Campground site fees. The Group Campground Sites may be reserved only for scouts, civic and church groups, it is also available to River Ridge Backpack Trail hikers. *See attached User Fee Schedule.*

Trustee Augustson asked about the building and shelter corporate rate rental price tier elimination.

Executive Director Pasquale answered that there were several companies that would book an area for their annual picnic; that happens very infrequently now.

Associate Director of Administration and Personnel Fox added this year there was only one company rental at Kennekuk, along with a large church group. Rentals would still be available to large groups, and there would be an, "as needed basis" price. These groups require paying for porta-potties and dumpster(s).

With no more questions or comments, *Trustee Arbuckle moved to approve the amended building and shelter reservation rates for 2022 and the 2022 User Fee Schedule as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Johnson.*

With no other questions or comments, President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Johnson	-	yes
Trustee Augustson	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Staske	-	yes

The vote was 5 – 0 in favor, motion to approve the 2022 rental and user fee schedules.

Agenda item eight f. Approve employee health insurance plan for period January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022. Executive Director Pasquale reported that no plan or premium quotes are available at this time. In 2020, the coverage period was moved to January 1st instead of December 1st for the same twelve-month period. The rates are typically not received until one month before the insurance goes into effect.

Trustee Johnson moved to table the approval of the employee health insurance plan until the more information is available. This was followed by a second from Trustee Augustson. All in favor by acclamation, motion carried.

Agenda item eight g. Approval of 2022 VCCD Board of Trustees Regular Meeting Schedule. Executive Director Pasquale presented the offer to change the time of the meetings to the trustees. Meeting are set at the Board's discretion.

There were no questions or comments, *Trustee Johnson moved to approve the proposed 2022 VCCD Board of Trustee Regular Meeting Schedule as presented. This was followed by a second from Trustee Gast.*

With no other questions or comments, President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Johnson	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Augustson	-	yes
Trustee Staske	-	yes

The vote was 5 – 0 in favor, motion to approve the 2022 VCCD Board of Trustee Meeting dates carried.

Agenda item eight h. Discussion and approval of 2022 full time employee salaries. The Trustees were provided with current salaries and salary history, along with across the board increases as well as 2, 2.5 and 3 percent increase scenarios. Executive Director Pasquale noted that executive session was not necessary when discussing the employees as a whole, only if an individual or group was discussed.

President Staske clarified the information for the Trustees, stating that a standard dollar amount is preferable rather than a percentage raise. Using one standard percentage increase will eventually create large gaps between the higher and lower salaried individuals, of course, higher paid employees receiving more dollars in total.

Executive Director Pasquale reported that Illinois Minimum Wage Requirements go up \$1/hour each year and part-time employees that have been employed several years are now making the same as a first year seasonal worker. Also, full-time employees that have been here several years with valuable experience may not earn much more than the Illinois State Minimum Wage.

The VCCD does not receive many applicants when a job is posted, and he feels that “staff retention is important”, as well as salary.

Brief discussion ensued regarding employee retention, new hires and salaries.

Trustee Johnson commented that he would like the employees to receive enough of a raise that their insurance increase does not “eat up” their salary increase.

Raises took effect the first payroll of December in 2021, this was before the new insurance deductions began. There are options regarding the increase and insurance premium start dates.

President Staske stated that he would like to approve the salaries at this meeting. He also commented that the District has a really good work force and long term stability is a real asset in any business.

Discussion ensued regarding the presented salary scenarios.

With no more comments or questions, *Trustee Johnson moved to approve the increase of \$2,000 for each full time employee. This was followed by a second from Trustee Augustson.*

With no other questions or comments, President Staske requested a roll call vote. The results as follows:

Trustee Johnson	-	yes
Trustee Augustson	-	yes
Trustee Gast	-	yes
Trustee Arbuckle	-	yes
Trustee Staske	-	yes

The vote was 5 – 0 in favor, motion to approve the 2022 VCCD Full Time Employee Salary Schedule.

Executive Director Pasquale asked when the new salary schedule should begin.

It was the consensus of the board to stay with the first payroll in December, as was done previously in December of 2020

There was no executive session.

Agenda item nine. Report from the Executive Director. Executive Director Pasquale reported that he left a message for Mike Bryant at Bryant Industries regarding dismantling and hauling away the train car located in the Bunker Hill Historic Area. He has not heard back.

The Gannett Outdoor Education Center project is continuing with the bathrooms and utility room now completed. Work has begun on the employee bathroom; the kitchen will be next. The next phase will be the addition to the east side and the teardown of the back classroom and rebuild it. He was hoping to pour the new addition foundation, but that will probably not happen until 2022 now. The current dedicated funds for the project: \$75,000 pledge from the VCCF and \$50,000 in the Wagner account. The VCCF has not been billed for any expenses yet. Executive Director Pasquale invited the VCCF to meet at the Gannett Center for their next meeting in December so they could see the progress that has been made.

November 12, 2021 was Forest Glen Park Foreman Jeff Howard's last day. He retired after 21 years with the District. This is a position that will have to be filled quickly. There is a part-time person working with Forest Glen Superintendent Mike Kotcher now. The job will be posted on Vermilion Advantage now that a salary has been set.

IDOT/IDNR hosted a small Kickapoo Rail Trail [KRT] Bridge and Parking Lot Dedication ceremony on November 5th. The Trustees should have received an email invitation. It was a nice event. The VCCD will be planning an open house type event to celebrate the Kickapoo Rail Progress in Vermilion County, perhaps in the spring for the donors and public. The Oakwood Community has been very welcoming of the trail. There is now a parking lot in Oakwood and the community has made an indoor restroom facility available to the public using the trail. There is also a rest node with a KRT bicycle rack made possible in part by Dr. Thomas Halloran.

Coming up on December 5th, there will be a Holiday Open House in the Bunker Hill Historic Area [BHHA] from 2 – 8 p.m. This year, the VCCD received a generous donation of the Brooks Family

Christmas light show. Chuck Brooks served on the VCCD Board of Trustees for one term, and after he passed away this year, his wife Rita contacted the District to donate all the lights and equipment. It is hoped that they will be ready for the public for Dec. 5th or before, remaining lit nightly from 5-8 p.m. through January 2nd. There is no charge, but there will be a donation box on site and a donation "button" for the show is located on the Vermilion County Conservation Foundation's website.

Associate Director of Administration and Personnel Fox reported that an attraction grant for boat docks for Lake Vermilion was applied for from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Cole Craft and she worked together on the \$50,000 match grant. They have not been contacted yet regarding the awards.

The second order of handrails arrived for the Heron County Boardwalk. This will complete the handrails to the halfway point or a little more.

There were no more questions. This concluded the Report from the Executive Director.

Agenda item ten. President's and Trustee's Comments.

President Staske stated that the Beech Grove Trail at Forest Glen Preserve looks great! He did not attend the dedication, but has visited the site. There is a new restroom facility there as well as picnic area and the paved trail was resurfaced. Very nice!

Executive Director Pasquale informed the trustees that Middle Fork Audubon Society was the driving force in fundraising over \$40,000, which included a grant for \$20,000 from the Wheeler Foundation. The VCCF pledged \$2,000 and was awarded a Clean Energy Grant of \$5,000 toward the project. There are still funds left that will be used for upgrades to the area too.

Trustee Gast had no comment.

Trustee Johnson had no comment.

Trustee Augustson had no comment.

President Staske welcomed Trustee Augustson to the VCCD Board.

This concluded President & Trustee Comments.

With no further discussion and all business transacted, the meeting was adjourned at 5:46 p.m.

Michael H. Gast
Secretary
VCCD Board of Trustees